The General Counsel’s Manual on Leading a Legal Team

Law Department Management

It’d be nice if every job came with a manual or video tutorial, but rarely do lawyers take the easy way. Pearson General Counsel and Chief Legal Officer Outside Bjarne Tellmann — and *ACC Docket* Career Path columnist — combined his legal expertise and writing talents into the

book Building an Outstanding Legal Team to help the new leaders in corporate law. Tellmann recently discussed his book at “Legal Teams Built to Win,” an event hosted by Outside GC LLC and Patent GC LLC at the George Town Club in Washington, DC. *ACC Docket* attended the swanky and informative event, and here’s what we learned.

The book discussion was set in a cozy room with a stone fireplace, which thankfully wasn’t lit during the balmy DC summer night. There, Susan Sneider, author of A Lawyer’s Guide to Networking, lead the interactive discussion with the audience. Her first question: What inspired him to write the book?

Susan Sneider and Bjarne Tellman speak to an audience about his book.

Tellmann joked it was his “sadomasochist streak.” But what actually inspired him was when he was at a previous company, and a talented new legal counsel asked him if there was a manual on leading a legal team. The only problem is that there wasn’t. With encouragement from some Harvard Law friends, Tellmann wrote the book that he believed GCs need to successfully run a law department.

But apart from the traditional responsibilities that GCs typically face, they must now tackle the modern challenges from the rapid change in the in-house industry. These changes stem from technology, globalization, and regulations, the latter of which Tellmann says have “expanded exponentially.”

Audience members enjoying the happy hour sponsored by Outside GC LLC and Patent GC LLC.

On top of that, GCs are expected to do more with less, often juggling several roles as once. Thankfully, there is a way to cope with the work overload. “Don’t do it yourself,” he reminded the audience. “You need an outstanding team.”

Sneider then directed the conversation to another office woe: intergenerational rifts. The key to integrating a multigenerational office, Tellmann recommended, “is to have clear communication between the generations.” Whether it’s face-to-face chats with baby boomers, emails to gen-Xers, or instant message to millennials, find what form of communication works best for your team so that they can succeed.

For more leadership advice, order Tellmann’s book *Building an Outstanding Legal Team*.

Karmen Fox

Web Content Editor

ACC